DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 394 574 JC 960 309

AUTHOR Kerwin, Mike; Rhoads, Judith
TITLE Improving Teaching through a Peer Support "Teacher Consultation Process."
PUB DATE Feb 96
NOTE 8p.; In: The Olympics of Leadership: Overcoming Obstacles, Balancing Skills, Taking Risks. Proceedings of the Annual International Conference of the National Community College Chair Academy (5th, Phoenix, AZ, February 14-17, 1996); see JC 960 276.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; *Faculty Development; *Instructional Improvement; Interprofessional Relationship; *Peer Evaluation; Program Descriptions; Teacher Competencies; Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Evaluation; *Teacher Improvement; Teaching Methods; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *University of Kentucky Community College System

ABSTRACT

The Teaching Consultation Program (TCP) is one of the most popular faculty development programs offered in the University of Kentucky Community Colleges (UKCC's), having trained over 500 faculty since its implementation in 1977. The TCP is a confidential, peer consulting program available to faculty who wish to analyze their teaching behaviors and make improvements. In TCP, consultants are carefully selected and trained, faculty participation is voluntary, consultants follow a well-defined set of procedures, and the materials used are field-tested and research-based. The following procedures are used in the program: (1) an initial interview of the faculty member; (2) data collection, through observations and videotapes of class sessions and interviews of students; (3) an analysis, conducted jointly by teachers and consultants, of the data collected; (4) the design and selection of three or four teaching improvement goals; and (5) an evaluation of the instructor's success in achieving goals. Faculty who are recognized by colleagues as outstanding teachers are invited to become teaching consultants and attend a 2-day workshop for training. Results from a 3-semester study of the TCP indicated that faculty who participated in the program raised their student ratings significantly compared to a control group of faculty who did not participate. (TGI)

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ED 394 574

# *IMPROVING TEACHING THROUGH A PEER SUPPORT "TEACHER CONSULTATION PROCESS"*

By

**Mike Kerwin**
**Coordinator, Faculty/Staff & Program Development**
**University of Kentucky Community College System**
**Lexington, KY**
**and**
**Judith Rhoads**
**Dean, Academic Affairs**
**Owensboro Community College**
**Owensboro, KY**

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TC-960 309

Paper Presented at the
Fifth Annual International Conference for
Community & Technical College Chairs, Deans and Other Organizational Leaders
February 14 - 17, 1996
Phoenix/Mesa, Arizona

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Michael Kerwin has coordinated faculty/staff and program development for the University of Kentucky Community College System since 1983. Prior to that time, he was an instructor of English at an urban research university for five years and at a rural community college for eight years. He holds a doctorate in adult and community college education and is interested in faculty development and instructional programs that enable people to work together, as colleagues, to become more effective learners. As such, he is an advocate for teaching consultation and contract learning programs. He received the John Fry Individual Merit Award from the National Council for Staff, Program and Organizational Development in 1991.

Judith Rhoads, Dean of Academic Affairs at Owensboro Community College, University of Kentucky Community College System. She was awarded a BS degree from Murray State University, and MA degree from Austin Peay State University, and a Doctorate in Human Resource Development from Vanderbilt University. Prior to her appointment at OCC, she was a professor of psychology at Madisonville Community College for seventeen years. Some highlights of her career include representing the community college faculty on the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees, completing a one year fellowship program with the American Council on Education, fifteen years as a teaching consultant, serving in numerous UK Community College leadership positions, and being selected teacher of the year several times.

**IMPROVING TEACHING THROUGH A PEER SUPPORT**
**" TEACHER CONSULTATION PROCESS"**

Michael Kerwin and Judith Rhoads
University of Kentucky Community College System

One of the most popular faculty development programs offered in the University of Kentucky Community College (UKCCS) is the Teaching Consultation Program. Since the Teaching Consultation Program was implemented in 1977 over 500 UKCCS faculty have participated in the program, and participants have consistently given it excellent ratings.

This presentation introduces faculty and administrators to the Teaching Consultation Program by addressing four major questions: What is the Teaching Consultation? How does it work? What does it do? How can a college start a consultation program? The presentation also identifies the key elements of effective consultation and describes a case study using Teaching Consultation.

What is Teaching Consultation?

Basically, Teaching Consultation is a peer consulting program available to faculty who wish to analyze their teaching behaviors and make changes in their teaching. Teaching Consultation is confidential, structured, voluntary, and independent of performance review. Faculty members, who are recognized by their colleagues as outstanding teachers and who have attended a workshop to prepare them to be consultants, serve as consultants. Teaching consultants work three-hour class to do so. In the 1991 spring semester, twenty teaching consultants worked with twenty-nine faculty clients on eleven of the fourteen UKCCS campuses.

What Are the Key Elements?

Teaching consultants [possess at least six elements that distinguish it from other collaborative faculty development programs, such as monitoring, and contribute to its popularity and effectiveness. First, consultants are carefully selected and prepared to conduct the program. Secondly, participation in the program is voluntary . Third, the program is owned by the faculty. Fourth, consultants follow a well-defined set of procedures when they consult with a faculty client. Fifth, the materials used in the program are field-tested and research-based. Sixth, research has shown that participation in the program has resulted in changes in teaching. Every aspect of the Teaching Consultation Program reflects these elements.

How Does it Work?

When they conduct the program, consultants follow a set of procedures developed in the School of Education in the University or Massachusetts at Amherst in the early 1970's. Those procedures which Bergquist and Phillips describe in Volume 2 of A Handbook for Faculty Development (1977) are designed to help faculty recognize and consciously develop instructional behaviors most appropriate for themselves and their students. The key stages are outlines below.

The initial interview. The consultant meets with the faculty member, clarifies the confidential nature of their relationship, explains the process, and identifies a specific class on which to concentrate. The consultant asks the faculty member to agree to participate in the process for the entire semester. If the faculty member agrees to participate, the consultant arranges to begin collecting data.

Data collection. The consultant interviews the faculty member, observes him or her teaching the class, videotapes an instructional session, and administers a questionnaire to the students in the class to obtain information about the instructor's goals and teaching behaviors. This stage requires about four weeks.

Data review and analysis. The consultant and the faculty member review the collected data. Together, they identify at least three teaching strengths and at least three teaching areas that could be improved.

Planning and implementing changes. The consultant and the faculty member identify three of four teaching improvement goals. The consultant helps the faculty member to select or design and implement strategies to meet these objectives. This stage requires at least eight weeks and the consultant monitors the instructor's progress weekly.

Evaluation. In the final three weeks of the semester, the consultant evaluates the instructor's success in achieving his or her goals. To accomplish this, another classroom visitation is made, another class is videotaped, and another questionnaire is administered to students. The data is reviewed by the consultant and instructor, and the instructor evaluates his or her experience in the program.

One of the key components of the Teaching Consultation Program is the Teaching Analysis by Students (TABS) questionnaire, which is used in the data collection stages. Based upon the extensive research of Dr. Robert Wilson and others at the University of California at Berkeley, this

questionnaire was developed originally at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. The original questionnaire contains 38 items describing instructional behaviors and 12 items describing student characteristics. The questionnaire use d in the Teaching Consultation Program at UKCCS retains 50 items but has been modified somewhat to meet the needs of community college students and faculty.

What Does it Do?

Results from a three-semester study conducted in UKCCS showed that a group of faculty who participated in the Teaching Consultation Program raised their student ratings significantly as compared to a control group who did not take part in the program. Furthermore, this higher rating persisted in the experimental group one semester following their participation in the program. In addition, faculty who have participated in the program have praised the program. A typical comment on the evaluation form that participants submit when they complete the program states "This was a wonderful opportunity to meet regularly with one of my colleagues and talk about teaching."

A Case Study

A case study of a hypothetical consulting situation illustrates how the Teaching Consultation Program works and how it can affect a faculty member's teaching.

Ms. Case has taught an introductory business management course for two years. Before coming to Anywhere Community College, she was a sales representative for a large retail organization for three years; she also holds a Master's degree in business administration. Although Ms. Case has received relatively high ratings on the student evaluations of her class, she is becoming frustrated as a teacher. The students in her business management course appear bored and come to class unprepared. She is thinking about leaving teaching and returning to business. Talking to a friend in the business division, she hears about the Teaching Consultation Program. She decides to talk to the consultant.

Ms. Case and the consultant begin their work together with an initial interview. The consultant describes the Teaching Consultation Program, and Ms. Case agrees to participate. In a second interview, Ms. Case talks about her teaching in depth, and the consultant learns about her problem with students who appear bored and apathetic. Ma. Case invites the consultant to observe her teaching the class. Following the

observation, the consultant videotapes and instructional session and administers the TABS questionnaire to the students in the class.

After the questionnaire responses have been processed, Ms. Case and the consultant review the questionnaire and the videotape. Together, they identify three teaching strengths and three areas that could be improved and where to focus their efforts for the rest of the semester. Specifically they decide to implement several teaching strategies to involve the students in learning about business management and to implement several stetting style changes--such as coming out from behind the podium--to give Ms. Case a more dynamic image.

The consultant continues to meet weekly with Ms. Case. Three weeks before the semester ends, the consultant videotapes her class again; the consultant also asks the students to complete another questionnaire containing items drawn from the TABS. The results of the videotape and the questionnaire show that the students are indeed more actively involved in the class. An equally important change has occurred in Ms. Case--she seems to be enjoying what she does; she appears much more self-confident and relaxed. In fact, she has decided to remain in teaching for another year; she also wants to begin her next class differently. She likes seeing her students get excited about business. The Case is a typical success story in The Teaching Consultation Program. Although nor all outcomes may be as dramatic, many are.

Program Implementation

Implementation of a teaching consultation program requires several elements to be in place before the first consultation begins. The first is an administrative commitment to a program that is independent of performance review. The second is coordination. Someone must schedule the consultation calendar, handle computer logistics, develop and coordinate workshops and prepare reports. Third is computer support. Arrangements to process the TABS questionnaire must be made. Fourth, provisions must be made to select and prepare the teaching consultants.

Although consultants follow a well-defined set of procedures in the Teaching Consultation Program and use a research-based student questionnaire as a part of the data collection process, the crucial element in the process is the consultants' ability to assist their colleagues in recognizing and consciously developing instructional behaviors must appropriate for themselves and their students.

The selection and professional development of teaching consultants is of utmost importance. As indicated earlier, only faculty who are recognized by their colleagues as outstanding teachers are invited to become teaching consultants. If these faculty accept this invitation, they must participate in an intensive two-day workshop to prepare to become consultants. It is interesting to note that almost all of the UKCCS consultants who attend this workshop have also been clients in the Teaching Consultation Program at one time.

Consultants who are working with faculty clients at UKCCS are also required to attend a two-day workshop each semester that they are consulting. This workshop is scheduled by the systemwide coordinator for the program to follow the systemwide administration of the TABS questionnaire. Consultants present a twenty-minute introduction of each of their clients at this workshop. The presentation includes a ten-minute videotape and a summary of the results of the TABS questionnaire. In a brainstorming session following this presentation, other consultants suggest teaching improvement strategies that the presenter could use with his or her clients.

The systemwide coordinator for the program also arranges for other professional development activities for teaching consultants. These may include workshops, symposia , or opportunities at attend a national conference on the improvement of college teaching or to apple for research grants.

Program Administration.

In UKCCS, a multi-campus system with fourteen colleges dispersed throughout Kentucky, the coordinator for Faculty/Staff and Program Development, a member of the Chancellor's staff, coordinates the Teaching Consultation Program. College presidents recruit teaching consultants and provide them with travel and released time. Hearing the compliments that students and faculty have given the Teachers Consultation Program has convinced college presidents that the program is well worth its cost.

Reference

Bergquist, W.H. & Phillips, S.R. (1977). A Handbook for Faculty Development. Vol ume2. Washington D.C.: The Council for the Development of Small Colleges.